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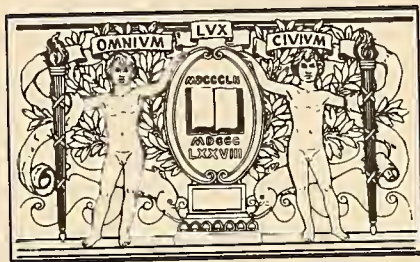


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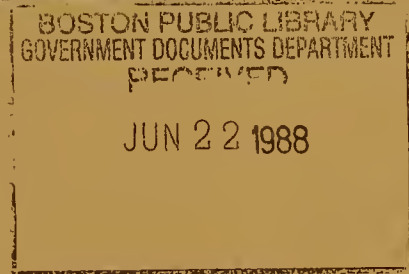








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# North Dorchester

## Neighborhood Profile

1988



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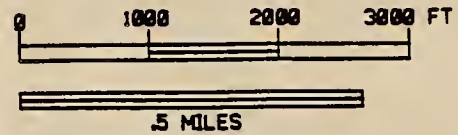
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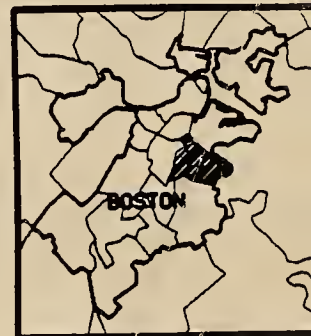
# PLANNING DISTRICT #11 NORTH DORCHESTER AND NEIGHBORHOOD STATISTICAL AREA



BOSTON HARBOR

#10  
UPHAMS CORNER /  
JONES HILL

#8  
COLUMBIA / SAVIN HILL /  
COLUMBIA PT





## NORTH DORCHESTER/UPHAMS CORNER NEIGHBORHOOD PROFILE

### Introductory Overview

The Dorchester area extends from Edward Everett Square to Mattapan Square, and includes a population of well over 100,000 people. Were it not located within Boston, it would be a major Massachusetts city in its own right. Dorchester includes South Dorchester/Fields Corner and Mattapan/Franklin, as well as North Dorchester/Uphams Corner, the focus of this neighborhood profile.

The North Dorchester/Uphams Corner planning district is in many ways like a small version of the entire city, being composed of many, distinct neighborhoods. These include Dudley, Columbia/Savin Hill, Uphams Corner/Jones Hill, Brunswick-King, and Columbia Point. After years of disinvestment and housing abandonment in many sections, particularly in the Dudley neighborhood, demolitions have created a significant amount of new open space.

### I. Neighborhood History

In June 1630, the Puritans, coming as prospective settlers, landed in a place called "Mattapanock" by the Indians, known today as Columbia Point. Their first houses were built near the junction of Pleasant and East Cottage streets. Fearing Indian attacks, all homes were originally built on four to six acre homesteads within a half mile of the Meetinghouse and close to a fort on top of Savin Hill.

The Uphams Corner area was soon known as "Burying Place Corner" after the Dorchester North Burying Ground which was established there in 1633. The Blake House was constructed nearby in 1648. As Boston's oldest standing house, it is on the National Historic Register along with the burying ground. During North Dorchester's first two centuries, agriculture was the primary means of livelihood. In 1747, the Shirley-Eustis House, which still exists today, was erected as a governor's mansion and colonial showplace.

As the southern portions of Dorchester founded their own town meetings, they formed separate towns so that by 1797 Dorchester was reduced to include only South Boston and Hyde Park, and in 1804, South Boston was annexed to Boston.

Toward the end of the Colonial period, wealthy Bostonians had begun to build country estates and summer homes on the hilltops to the south of the city. Since the still unfilled South Bay isolated Dorchester from Boston, many such estates were created in Roxbury, but some chose sites in North Dorchester. Around 1800, Amos Upham built a grocery store at what is now the corner of Columbia Road and Dudley Street to serve residents as they traveled by horse between their country homes and Boston.

During the early 1800s, the portion of Dorchester between Dudley Street and Boston developed into a working class mill town community because of its proximity to Boston and water-powered industry. The opening of the Boston-Providence Railroad in 1835, and replacement of the hourly stage coach to Lower Mills by the Old Colony Railroad in 1844, made Dorchester more accessible to upper middle class Yankees and Irish who built large one and two family Victorian homes on Savin Hill and Jones Hill. Replacement of the Dorchester Avenue horsecar by the electric tram in 1857 opened the area between the hills to further development.

As Dorchester became increasingly a suburb of Boston, more rural Hyde Park formed a separate town in 1868 to avoid annexation. A year later, the people of Dorchester voted for annexation to Boston. Based on the extension of the streetcar lines and the municipal water supply, development boomed from 1870 until 1914 when the area was





entirely built up. As transportation facilities improved, a home separate from work became possible. Later, a building code stimulated the development of inexpensive three family houses which became known as "triple deckers." These cost \$4,800 to build, as opposed to \$13 - 30,000 for a proper victorian home.

Uphams Corner location at the junction of five streetcar lines made it Dorchester's marketplace, serving 250,000 people, and for a time in the 1920's, Cifrino's Market (now again Uphams Corner Market) was the first, and for many years, the largest supermarket in the world.

The opening of the rapid transit line between Andrew Square and Fields Corner in 1927 placed downtown Boston within 15 minutes of Dorchester. With the influx of working class people, the disappearance of most vacant land, and the increase in immigrants, many of the older residents left for suburbs further south.

The Old Colony Railroad closed as the Southeast Expressway was opened in 1959. During the early 1960s, blacks replaced the Jewish community as homeowners in many parts of Roxbury and Dorchester, aided by the Boston Banks Urban Renewal Group (BBURG) program in the Dudley and Brunswick-King areas, which funded lower-income minority home mortgages on a large scale.

In the 1970s Spanish and Cape Verdean families have become the principal homeowners in the Dudley neighborhood, and have had a stabilizing effect upon this area. Young professional, middle class families have again discovered the exceptional housing values of the Dorchester tripledecker and victorian homes, and have moved into the Columbia-Savin Hill and Uphams Corner-Jones Hill sections.

Table 1a. Population and Housing, 1950 - 1980

	1950 -----	1960 -----	1970 -----	1980 -----
Population	34,468 (4.3)	34,856 (5.0)	32,665 (5.1)	23,789 (4.2)
Housing units	9,376 (4.2)	10,453 (4.4)	10,466 (4.5)	10,106 (4.2)
Persons/unit	3.7	3.3	3.1	2.4

Note: figures in brackets are percent of Boston total.

Source: a)

See section at end of profile describing sources, as well as the methodology.

## II. Demographics

Although North Dorchester lost over 10,000 in population between 1950 and 1980 due to declining household size, it has recently stabilized and even regained some population in the 1980s. The median age of its residents, 27.8 years, was a little lower than that of the city. A great number of children, ages 0 to 14, makes Dorchester one of Boston's primary child-raising neighborhoods, along with Mattapan and Jamaica Plain.



Table IIa. Population, 1985\*

	Total	Population in group quarters	Household population	Persons per household
	-----	-----	-----	-----
North Dorchester	26,005	575	25,433	2.8
City of Boston	601,095	49,595	551,500	2.4

\* Note difference between total population and household population. Most of the following tables refer to household population as explained in the end notes for source b).

Table IIb. Age Composition of Household Population, 1985  
(in percent)

	Median age	0-14	15-24	25-34	35-54	55+
	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----
North Dorchester	27.8 yrs	23	19	20	20	17
City of Boston	28.8 yrs	17	23	22	20	18

Note: Percent may not total to 100 due to rounding.  
Source: b)

Racially, North Dorchester had a mixed populace somewhat similar to the South End or Jamaica Plain. Whites predominated at 66 percent while blacks accounted for 18 percent of total population. Over 3,000 persons, 13 percent of its population, are of Spanish-speaking origin.

Table IIc. Racial/Ethnic Composition of Household Population, 1985  
(in percent)

	White, not Hispanic	Black	Hispanic*	Asian	Other races
	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----
North Dorchester	66	18	13	1	2
City of Boston	62	25	7	5	1

Note: Percent may not total to 100 due to rounding.

\* Hispanic includes self-designated Hispanics plus those who speak Spanish in the home or were born in a Spanish-speaking country

Source: b)

In 1985, traditional couples, with or without children, and single-parent families were overrepresented in North Dorchester, whereas single house-holders were under-represented because its dwellings are suited to larger households.





Table IIId. Household Composition, 1985  
(in percent)

	Traditional families and couples	Single parent households	Single person household	Household of unrelated individuals
North Dorchester	40	21	24	15
City of Boston	36	16	34	14

Note: Percent may not total to 100 due to rounding.

Source: b)

III. Income and Poverty

North Dorchester residents had a slightly lower median household income than average in the city of Boston in 1984. Significant numbers of low-income residents were mainly found among minority families with children, and households composed of unrelated persons were especially poor. Overall, persons in South Dorchester had a 34 percent poverty rate, considerably above the 21 percent rate citywide.

Table IIIa. Median Household Income and Portion in Poverty, 1979 and 1984

	Median household income		Percent in poverty			
	1979	1984	1979 all persons	1984 all persons	1984 all families	1984 unrelated persons
North Dorchester	\$12,042	\$18,600	21	34	31	50
City of Boston	12,530	19,250	20	21	22	17

Source: b)

IV. Mobility and Migration

Despite considerable outmigration during the past thirty years, nearly two-thirds of the North Dorchester residents were born in Massachusetts, a proportion well above the citywide average. Although general mobility patterns mirrored the city averages, more households had remained in their homes or apartments from two to fifteen years.

Table IVa. Place of Birth of 1985 Residents  
(in percent)

	Massachusetts	Other U.S. and Canada	Europe	Elsewhere
North Dorchester	64	20	5	11
City of Boston	55	25	5	15

Note: Percent may not total to 100 due to rounding.

Source: b)



Table IVb. Years in Dwelling Unit of 1985 Household Residents  
(in percent)

	<2	2-5	6-10	11-15	16+
North Dorchester	24	33	19	15	10
City of Boston	28	27	16	10	19

Note: Percent may not total to 100 due to rounding.

Source: b)

#### V. Employment

The labor participation rate in North Dorchester is low, and many are engaged in trade.

Table Va. Labor Force Status, Spring 1985  
(in percent)

	Participation rate (Persons aged 16 yrs +)	Unemployment rate
North Dorchester	53	3
City of Boston	66	6

Source: b)

Table Vb. Industry of Resident Workers, 1985  
(in percent)

	Manuf'g	Trade	F.I.R.E.*	Services	Gov't	Other
North Dorchester	9	21	12	21	11	26
City of Boston	14	16	8	36	11	15

Note: Percent may not total to 100 due to rounding.

\* F.I.R.E. is an abbreviation for Finance, Insurance and Real Estate.

Source: b)

Table Vc. Employment Located Within Neighborhood, 1983

	Manuf'g	Trade	F.I.R.E.	Services	Gov't	Other
North Dorchester	2,100	800	2,500	2,900	1,900	1,100
City of Boston	48,900	81,000	78,800	171,000	91,500	58,100

Source: c)

#### VI. Housing

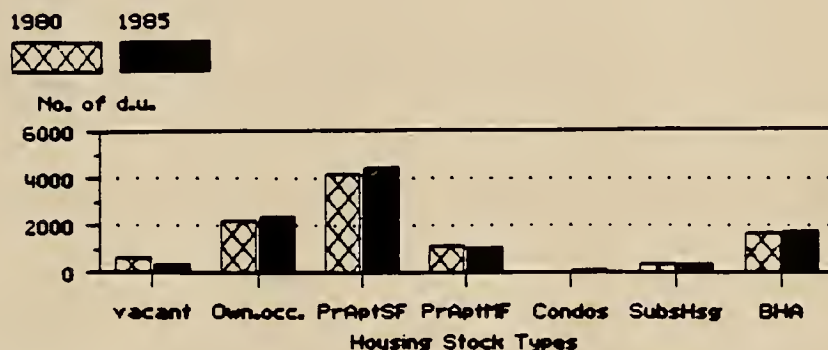
Like many of the districts a little farther from downtown, much of Dorchester is dominated by 1-4 unit frame housing, the reknowned tripledeckers. Here however, over three out of four such structures are resident-owned. The one fifth of the stock that is assisted housing is largely concentrated in the public housing at Columbia Point. In the past five years, vacancies in its one to four-family structures have diminished significantly, from 9 percent to 5 percent, as relatively low property values made many Dorchester neighborhoods attractive to homebuyers. In North Dorchester there



have been less than 100 condominium conversions, as well as some 200 accessory apartments installed.

Property values in North Dorchester have increased sharply, but in 1985 1-3 family values as well as rents were still below citywide averages.

Table VIa. Housing Stock Composition by Structure Types, 1980 and 1985  
(in dwelling units)



=====										
IN.DOR/UPHAMS C.	Private Housing and				Condos		Assisted Housing:			
Stock type:	1-4 vacant	Own.occ.	PrAptSF	PrAptMF	CondoSF	CondoMF	SubstHsg	BHA	Total	
1-4(SF)/5+(MF)	1-4(SF)	1-4(SF)	1-4(SF)	5+(MF)	1-4(SF)	5+(MF)	Mixed	5+(MF)	Mixed	
=====										
1980	9%	623	2,191	4,200	1,156	0	6	323	1,656	10,155
% of pl.dist.		6	22	41	11	0	0	3	16	100
=====										
1985	5%	368	2,319	4,439	1,059	0	83	323	1,767	10,358
% of pl.dist.		4	22	43	10	0	1	3	17	100
=====										
change '80-'85		(255)	128	239	(97)	0	77	0	111	203
% chg from '80		(41)	6	6	(8)	inf	1,283	0	0	2
=====										

Source: c)

Table VIb. 1-3 Family Property Values and Median Gross Rents, 1980 and 1985

	1-3 family property values		Median monthly gross rents	
	1979	1985	1980	1985
North Dorchester	\$16,000	\$ 80,000	\$227	\$380
City of Boston	32,000	115,000	254	400

Source: b)





VII. Transportation

Commuting to work, 47 percent used the MBTA and 47 percent commuted by car, because considerably fewer than average can walk to work. In terms of car ownership, 42 percent of the households owned no vehicles as of 1985, and only one household in eight had two or more cars.

Table VIIa. Means of Household Transportation to Work, 1985  
(in percent)

	Vehicle -----	MBTA -----	Walk -----	Other -----
North Dorchester	47	47	5	2
City of Boston	50	33	15	3

Note: Percent may not total to 100 due to rounding.  
Source: b)

Table VIIb. Number of Vehicles Owned per Household, 1985  
(in percent)

	None -----	1 -----	2 -----	3 or more -----
North Dorchester	42	45	9	3
City of Boston	39	42	14	5

Note: Percent may not total to 100 due to rounding.  
Source: b)

VII. Summary of Recent and Imminent Development

The North Dorchester planning district will have experienced over \$208 M (million) in investment over the 1975 to 1989 period, according to source e). Almost half will have been in residential development, which will have totalled \$102.7 M in the creation of 1,960 dwelling units (DU) in North Dorchester, of which 1,396 DU are new construction (71%), 236 DU are non-residential adaptive reuse (12%), and 328 DU are renovations (17%). The types of units being developed include 1,696 rental units (86%, many under subsidy), 69 single family houses (4%), 64 condominiums (3%), 114 B.H.A. units (6%), and 17 unclassified units (1%). The Columbia Point reconstruction project consists of 1,280 DU, which is 65 percent of the total number of units to be developed in North Dorchester.

The office industry is the second largest sector in North Dorchester, with an investment of \$34.5 M, or 17 percent of the total investment. During this period, a total of 250,000 square feet (SF) of office space will have been developed in the district, half of which is situated at the Bayside Exposition Center. In addition, the State of Massachusetts is constructing a 100,000 SF archives and records center adjacent to the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library in Columbia Point.

Recreation and cultural investments are third, with \$24.5 M, or 12 percent of all development in the district during this period. The major projects include the Kennedy Library which was completed in 1978 at a cost of \$19 M and the Strand Theater renovation which was also completed in 1978 and cost \$2.7 M.





The UMass Harbor Campus predates this period, but the educational sector also remained strong, with an investment of \$17.5 M, or 8 percent of all development. This money was spent on the UMass Boston Gymnasium which was completed in 1979.

The exhibition and convention industry invested \$15.6 M in North Dorchester to create the Bayside Exposition Center. This facility was completed in 1983 and was converted from a former shopping mall.



Sources and Methodology

- a) - *U.S. Census of Population and Housing, 1950 - 1980*
- b) - *B.R.A. and P.F.D. Household Survey, 1985*, conducted by the Center for Survey Research, U. Mass. at Boston. A sample of over 2,000 households, carefully drawn to reflect Boston's household population, was questioned in the spring of 1980, to parallel the 1980 U.S. Census. In 1985, exactly five years later, the same methodology was employed again to obtain an update and to identify neighborhood shifts. This survey did not include the group quarters population

To learn more about changes in these planning districts by 1985, the several thousand observations available from the 1985 BRA/PFD Household Survey were differentiated to the limit. Knowing such changes as the shift in number of persons by race/ethnicity and age group in each district is valuable for planning. However, this divides the available data into so many cells that it limits reliability tests. The inferences should therefore be viewed as suggestive rather than conclusive.

- c) - *Boston's Changing Housing Patterns, 1970 to 1985*, Roif Goetze, consultant to the B.R.A., November 1986. The 1980 U.S. Census does not specifically identify assisted dwelling units or the structure types within which they occur. It also does not indicate the type of stock in which condominiums are located, or when rental dwellings are in resident-owned structures. Therefore, available city data were carefully analyzed to obtain an overview and identify current housing patterns, as described in this source paper.

To aid in tracing the 1980 to 1985 changes in Table VIa, the housing stock was divided into units located in 1-4 unit structures, and those in 5 or more multi-unit structures. The 1-4s, dubbed **1-4(SF)** for single family, are largely singles, duplexes and triple-deckers, and tend to have a high rate of owner occupancy. **PrAptSF** designates the private apartments rented in this stock. In 1984, significant condominium conversion of triple-deckers commenced in some districts, shown as **CondoSF**.

Multifamily is designated as **5+(MF)**, and includes private rentals in this stock, **PrAptMF**, and condominiums, **CondoMF**, as well as public housing owned and managed by the Boston Housing Authority, **BHA**. Subsidized housing, **SubsHsg**, refers to privately-owned developments assisted under such federal programs as Section 221(d)(3), Section 236, and Section 8, as well as state assistance programs under EOCD and MHFA. The newly built assisted housing tends to be in multifamily structures, whereas the rehabilitated stock is more likely to be in 1-4 unit stock.

Table VIa also shows how the total stock in each time period is distributed, as well as the absolute and percent change.

- d) - *U.S. Bureau of the Census, "County Business Patterns," 1983*
- e) - *A Summary and Survey of Development in Boston, 1975 - 1989*, John Avault and Mark Johnson, April 1987, based on compilations maintained on "ULTRALIST" by the BRA Research Department



















